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SPOTLESS TABLE LINEN

SEP 1

1938

A radio conversation between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. John Baker, Office of Information, broadcast Thursday, August 11, 1938, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 93 associate radio stations.

--ooOoo--

JOHN BAKER:

And here's Ruth Van Deman, the lady who taught us how to make peach preserves last Thursday. How's business today, Ruth?

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

Feeling the altitude a little, thank you.

BAKER:

The altitude? What do you mean? Washington's only a few feet above sea level.

VAN DEMAN:

That's just the trouble. I've had this postcard from the far, far West. And it must be from a mother, by the way, because she asks for the bulletin on "Good Food Habits for Children". She says: "I listen every weekday to the Farm and Home Hour while up here in the mountains, 7000 feet up and a lovely place."

BAKER:

Did she say there was good fishing?

VAN DEMAN:

No. But I'm sure there's everything 7000 feet up.

BAKER:

Mountain air to breathe. - -

VAN DEMAN:

Fish John Baker might catch. - - -

BAKER:

(If they didn't see me coming.)

VAN DEMAN:

But we must get down to the business of taking the peach stains out of the tablecloth.

BAKER

How did you know?

VAN DEMAN:

Know what?

(over)

BAKER:

That I spilled the peach preserves - - -

VAN DEMAN:

Oh I'm psychic about those things.

BAKER:

I'll have to be careful.

VAN DEMAN:

You were just lucky you didn't get fresh peach juice on the best satin damask - - -

BAKER:

Well, I did get a drop or two - - -

VAN DEMAN:

Everybody seems to be doing it. Margaret Furry, in our textile lab., is busy these days telling folks how to take out fruit stains -- and iced tea and coffee stains--and mildew stains. They come with the good old summer time.

BAKER:

Then you think I don't deserve an unusually black mark.

VAN DEMAN:

No, but I expect you could chalk yourself up an unusually white mark with the Lady of the House if you drew forth Farmer's Bulletin 1474--and got out the stain removing kit - - -

BAKER:

You suggesting that I apply a little chemistry in the home?

VAN DEMAN:

That's the idea.

BAKER:

Not half bad. But isn't peach stain a bad one to try to move?

VAN DEMAN:

It is if it gets set. If you put soap on it first, or press it with a hot iron, you bring out the tannin.

BAKER:

Tannin, that's it. I thought I remembered something about tannin in peaches.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, there's tannin in most of the vegetables and fruits. And in tea and coffee, and chocolate, ginger ale, root beer, and a lot of the other beverages.

BAKER:

And tobacco. I sat down on a wet cigarette stub once in my best white flannels.

VAN DEMAN:

Sad, very sad. That was a hard one to get out.

BAKER:

I put it up to the dry cleaner.

VAN DEMAN:

You were wise. Because the tannin in a stain like that reacts with the protein in wool to form a leather-like substance that practically refuses to dissolve. But stains on white cotton or linen, like the table cloth, are easier to bleach out.

BAKER:

Bleach? What kind of a bleach do you recommend?

VAN DEMAN:

Sodium perborate is a good mild one.

BAKER:

Let me write that down.

VAN DEMAN:

Sodium.

BAKER:

S-o-d-i-u-m.

VAN DEMAN:

Perborate.

BAKER:

P-e-r ? - - -

VAN DEMAN:

- - - b-o-r-a-t-e.

BAKER:

P-e-r-b-o-r-a-t-e. Can I get sodium perborate at the drugstore?

VAN DEMAN:

I think so. Or if you want to, call it perborate of soda. But before we use a chemical bleach, let's rinse out all of the peach stain we can.

BAKER:

Rinse? With just plain water?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, just water. No soap. The water will wash off any traces of peach pulp, and melt the sugar. If there'd happened to be cream with the peaches, the cold water would take that out and keep it from setting in the fibers.

BAKER:

O.K. I'll bathe the spot under the cold water faucet.

VAN DEMAN:

With some kinds of fruit stains, after you've rinsed them in cold water, you can get them out completely by stretching them over a bowl and pouring a stream of boiling water on them from a teakettle held 2 or 3 feet higher. But with this peach stain, I think we'd better rub on some warm ... glycerin next.

BAKER:

Warm glycerin.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, either glycerin or alcohol dissolves tannin.

BAKER:

That's right. My organic chemistry is coming back to me now. Glycerin, solvent for tannin.

VAN DEMAN:

Then rinse out the glycerin. And if you still have an ugly brown spot on the white damask, we'll have to use the bleach.

BAKER:

Sodium perborate.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, dissolve two or three teaspoons of the perborate of soda in a cup of water and put the stained place to soak in it.

BAKER:

Very well. In she goes.

VAN DEMAN:

Don't expect results too quickly. Perborate of soda is a gentle, rather leisurely bleaching agent. But it won't hurt the white linen to stand in this bleach all day or all night.

BAKER:

That's good. It wouldn't be very helpful to have a hole in place of the stain.

VAN DEMAN:

Not so very. And after the stain's all gone, the whole cloth needs a thorough washing in soap and water to take away any traces of the chemicals. They might tender the fibers if they stayed in.

BAKER:

And you say this same method works on tea and coffee stains? And watermelon?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes. There's tannin even in watermelon juice. But not enough generally to leave a bad stain.

BAKER:

Didn't you say something about mildew?

VAN DEMAN:

I certainly did. The damp weather we've been having has made the mildew grow on the bath towel almost overnight.

BAKER:

That's right. Mildew is a kind of mold that flourishes in damp warm weather. Doesn't it sometimes grow right into the fibers of the cloth?

VAN DEMAN:

It will if it isn't washed and bleached out promptly.

BAKER:

Do you have to use a chemical bleach for that?

VAN DEMAN:

Only for a very bad stain. Sometimes the acid in sour milk is enough to loosen a mildew stain, if the cloth is soaked in the sour milk overnight and then put out in the sun. If that doesn't work, lemon juice, and salt, and sunshine may.

BAKER:

Lemon juice first, and salt on top?

VAN DEMAN:

It doesn't much matter which comes first. The idea is to keep the cloth moist with the lemon juice. So you keep adding more as it dries. If these mild acids don't take the mildew out, then you have to resort to a chemical bleach.

BAKER:

Sodium perborate do the trick with mildew stain too?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes. It's coming to be one of the best bleaches for all white fabrics. It won't injure any kind of cloth provided it's washable--cotton, linen, silk, wool, or rayon. Colored fabrics of course are another story.

BAKER:

You'd put sodium perborate then on the must list for the stain removal kit?

VAN DEMAN:

I'd prefer it to Javelle water. Even though you can make up the Javelle water at home with washing soda and chloride of lime, you can't use it on silk, or wool, or rayon. It rots those fibers, and it's pretty hard even on the others.

BAKER:

Ruth, I have an idea. I'm going to put up a neat little shelf somewhere in the Baker homestead for stain removers, where I can get at them quick.

VAN DEMAN:

Noble resolve.

BAKER:

And I'm going to take your stain bulletin and make a list of what to put on that shelf.

VAN DEMAN:

Very smart idea indeed. You'll want some absorbents, and some solvents, and some bleaches. So's to be ready for everything.

BAKER:

And, Ruth, if anybody else should have this same idea and write for a copy of the stain bulletin, is there a good supply on hand?

VAN DEMAN:

As far as I know, there is.

BAKER:

I'll make that offer then. If anyone wants a copy of Farmers' Bulletin 1474, "Stain Removal from Fabrics: Home Methods", send a card to Ruth Van Deman, at the Bureau of Home Economics in Washington, D.C. And thank you, Ruth. We'll be looking for you again next Thursday.

VAN DEMAN:

Unless the altitude gets me first.

BAKER:

Well, Mr. Corrigan got in town yesterday -- maybe we can get some altitude for you in his airplane. We'll be looking for you next Thursday.

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